CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 February 2001, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Christopher Westdal (Canada)

GE.01-60551 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 866th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Myanmar, New Zealand, Malaysia, Sweden, who will make a statement on behalf of the European Union, China and the United States of America, after which I plan to offer some concluding remarks of my own.

I give the floor now to the representative of Myanmar, Ambassador Mya Than.

Mr. MYA THAN (Myanmar): Mr. President, I should like to express my delegation's profound gratification with the effective manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of the Conference on Disarmament during this first difficult month of its 2001 session. I applaud you for your great efforts.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Petko Draganov, for his tireless efforts and invaluable contribution to the Conference's work during his long tenure as President, to the end of December 2000.

I also wish to extend a very warm welcome to our colleagues who have recently joined us in the Conference on Disarmament: His Excellency Mr. Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Rakesh Sood of India, His Excellency Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Horacio Solari of Argentina, His Excellency Mr. Sverre Bergh Johansen of Norway and Her Excellency Ms. Amina Chawahir Mohamed of Kenya. Most of them are our old friends. We look forward to deepening our friendship and to close cooperation with them all.

Mr. President, the focus of consultations and discussions among the member delegations in the Conference on Disarmament is now on how to revitalize the Conference and on the kind of useful work that we shall do in the Conference, in the absence of a consensus programme of work. I recall that, at the informal plenary meeting on 8 February 2001, you said that now we might turn our attention to "plan B", while continuing our efforts to achieve "plan A". I shall, therefore, devote this statement to my proposal for "plan B" and shall reserve my delegation's general policy statement for a more opportune time later on.

Mr. President, the Conference on Disarmament is a unique institution. It is the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with arms control and disarmament. It has a track record of many multilateral agreements on arms control and disarmament. As a matter of fact, all the existing multilateral agreements on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are products of the Conference on Disarmament. This forum is capable of producing substantive arms control and disarmament agreements when the member States have the political will and have mandated it to do so. The present impasse is due to a lack of political will on the part of some member States but is not due to any inherent inefficiency of the Conference. Having said this, I do believe that there is still room for improvement in the Conference's methods of work.

(Mr. Mya Than, Myanmar)

There are many aspects to the question of how to improve these methods of work. In this statement, I shall focus on only one aspect: how to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and start a process of dialogue that will facilitate our endeavours to reach a consensus programme of work and to carry out our real substantive work.

Mr. President, your analysis of the present state of consultations at the plenary meeting on 1 February 2001 and at the informal plenary meeting on 8 February 2001 indicated that things were not moving at all in these consultations. You, Mr. President, have tried your best to reach a consensus text on a programme of work by conducting continuous and intensive consultations. I admire your great energy, tireless efforts and ingenious diplomatic initiatives. Your consultations and activities in this connection are not confined to Geneva. You have travelled to Beijing, Moscow, London, Paris and Washington to enter into serious consultations with high-ranking authorities in those capitals. Notwithstanding all these endeavours, your consultations have so far yielded no positive results. This is through no fault of yours. Nor is it because of a lack of perseverance or a lack of ingenuity on your part. It is simply because of the current political situation and the underlying political issues. Notwithstanding the lack of any tangible results, we commend you on your tireless efforts.

This, then, is the situation. Now the question is: what shall we do in the Conference on Disarmament pending an agreement on a programme of work? If I am not mistaken, the issue of the programme of work is likely to remain pending for some time. I believe that we should not let the Conference lie idle until we reach agreement on a programme of work.

While a consensus programme of work is our objective, and our delegation wants to have it as soon as, and as much as, any other delegation, I should like to propose that, pending an agreement on a programme of work, the President should convene plenary meetings devoted to substantive items on the agreed agenda. The outline of my proposal is as follows:

(a) The President should continue to conduct his ongoing consultations on a programme of work;

(b) Member delegations should be encouraged to make the optimum use of regular plenary meetings to address substantive issues and make their contributions;

(c) At the same time, the President should convene, in addition to the regular plenary meetings, plenary meetings devoted to substantive items on the agreed agenda which the Conference adopted on the opening day of its 2001 session. Since we have already agreed on this year's agenda, discussion of substantive items one by one should not pose any problems. Each of these plenary meetings may be devoted to a substantive item: namely, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; etc.;

(Mr. Mya Than, Myanmar)

(d) The President should structure, to the extent possible, discussions on particular substantive agenda items or subjects. He should, at the same time, allow and encourage member delegations to make general comments and raise any issue related to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the agenda items or subjects under discussion;

(e) In this context, member delegations and groups of member States should also be encouraged to submit papers - working papers and non-papers - and to put forward specific proposals;

(f) Salient points of the discussions at these plenary meetings should be compiled and incorporated in the Conference's report.

Furthermore, the President should also be encouraged to conduct informal consultations and discussions with member delegations and appropriately structured groups of member States on how to overcome the present impasse and move forward in the Conference on Disarmament.

In essence, the plenary meetings I have referred to in my proposal would be something like the informal plenary meeting that you convened on Thursday, 8 February 2001.

The main thrust of my proposal is to make optimum use of the mechanism of plenary meetings devoted to substantive issues and any issues that member delegations may wish to raise relating to the work of the Conference.

This is the outline of my proposal. It may be modified as necessary and appropriate so as to reach consensus among all member delegations. My delegation is very flexible.

May I stress here that the purpose of this proposal is not to replace the current efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work but to facilitate and serve as a preparatory process leading to and supportive of reaching consensus on a programme of work which, in turn, will enable us to start our substantive work.

Mr. President, I put forward this proposal with the best of intentions in order to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and to facilitate our efforts to secure a consensus programme of work and commence our real substantive work.

I am merely placing this proposal on the table. I am not seeking a decision on it immediately. I shall leave it to the incoming president and subsequent presidents to take it up for a decision when the time is opportune.

I hope that this proposal to make optimum use of the mechanism of such plenary meetings will receive the serious and favourable consideration of the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Mya Than, Myanmar)

It is true that this arrangement is not entirely satisfactory. It will, however, be a workable and useful exercise. The question here is: pending and short of an agreement on a programme of work, what kind of goal-oriented and useful process can we have in the Conference? My proposal offers one possible way of achieving such a process.

We believe that such plenary meetings will provide us with an opportunity to understand each other's positions better, to identify and clarify the issues, and to explore ways and means of moving forward. Furthermore, they can also generate momentum and facilitate our search for a consensus text on our programme of work.

Let me further illustrate how this proposal could facilitate our efforts to secure a consensus programme of work by taking the analogy of a patient in a coma. Let us suppose that a patient has a high fever caused by malaria. The patient goes into a coma. The physician, anxious to save the patient's life, tries, as a first step, to resuscitate the patient and make him regain consciousness. Once the patient has recovered from the coma, the next step taken by the physician is to cure the patient of malaria and to restore him to normal good health.

The first step, of resuscitating of the patient, is analogous to making optimum use of the mechanism of plenary meetings devoted to substantive issues on the agenda. The second step, of curing the patient of the disease, is analogous to reaching agreement on a programme of work. The first step, in our analogy, by no means hampers but rather helps the second step - that of curing the patient. In the same way, the first step of convening plenary meetings, as outlined in my proposal, will only facilitate the second step, of reaching agreement on a programme of work.

Mr. President, I hope that my proposal, outlined above, will be a useful input and that it will help us to start the work of the Conference on Disarmament on "plan B", leading to "plan A".

The PRESIDENT: Ambassador Mya Than, I thank you for that creative and resuscitating statement and for your very kind words about my work. I now invite the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Clive Pearson, to follow suit.

Mr. PEARSON (New Zealand): Mr. President, at the outset may I congratulate you, albeit so late in your term, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Be assured of our continuing cooperation and support. I also extend a warm welcome to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey.

Mr. President, I have the honour of taking the floor today on behalf of the delegations of New Zealand and South Africa. I do so in the context of the memorandum of cooperation on disarmament issues between our two countries.

Last year, when nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts seemed to be faltering, the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed on a package of new undertakings. Many of these broke new ground. Some of the measures

(Mr. Pearson, New Zealand)

proposed were multilateral, others were bilateral or plurilateral. The intention was unambiguous: to promote a set of undertakings whereby the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation could be constructively reinvigorated and redirected.

Two of the agreed NPT undertakings have particular significance for the Conference's programme of work and can be used to build on the progress we jointly made during 2000.

These undertakings call for: first, the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament where the Conference is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate establishment of such a body; and, second, the necessity for negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, where the Conference is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty with the view to their conclusion within five years.

Mr. President, South Africa and New Zealand attach very great importance to the full implementation of the commitments entered into at the NPT Review Conference. In addition, we have fully supported your efforts to get down to work in this Conference. The Conference concluded its work last year with the understanding that CD/1624, or the "Amorim text", was a basis for further intensive consultations. We have also welcomed your efforts further to develop the Amorim language. We are extremely disappointed that this is continuing to prove elusive.

The proposals in CD/1624 are far from perfect, especially the mandate on nuclear disarmament. The NPT delivered a mandate which is very clear in its call for the Conference on Disarmament to "deal" with nuclear disarmament. The language before us is significantly weaker, nevertheless we have been prepared to work with it. As you may recall, I made an informal suggestion to strengthen the nuclear disarmament mandate last week. We appreciate, however, that at this stage we must all remain focused on what can realistically and practically be achieved.

We would be hesitant about and would have to consider carefully our positions on proposals that divert attention to "make-work" solutions for the Conference on Disarmament, if they were to reduce the relevance of this negotiating body to that of a debating society. Moreover, proposals for thematic discussions, however well intended, run a risk of providing convenient cover for those who do not want to engage in real negotiations. Positions could become more - and not less - entrenched. But the time may fast be coming when we have to take a hard look at how this Conference is delivering on its mandate.

This is a defining moment for the Conference on Disarmament. Mr. President, you are absolutely right in your observation that the Conference's negotiating mandate is as unique as it is necessary for all of us committed to further progress on disarmament.

At a time when there are disturbing signs of a preference for unilateral solutions or options, it is essential for the continuation of multilateralism that this body re-engages in real work. We fully support unilateral arms reductions, but not unilateral action which might have a negative impact on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Pearson, New Zealand)

While each of us has the right to determine our own security and defence needs, history and common sense demonstrate that unilateralism will not guarantee international security. This is a collective responsibility. We need to be careful not to misappropriate strategic considerations to conceal procrastination on disarmament.

Let us be clear also at this crucial moment in the Conference on Disarmament that disarmament is a security-building process and not an optional extra. Those disarmament pledges made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference are far-reaching. Disinclination will undermine and discredit the non-proliferation regime. Seven months have passed and the opportunity to build on the NPT success has not been grasped.

Mr. President, you have pointed out to us that this is "a brand new day". It is time for the nuclear-weapon States to settle their differences and jointly to start implementing their commitments with purpose and determination. We are ready to make compromises to achieve a programme of work, and we are looking to others in this chamber to do the same, and to do it now.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Pearson for that statement and for your kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, Mr. Raja Reza.

Mr. REZA (Malaysia): Mr. President, as this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and your untiring efforts and endeavours in reaching consensus on the programme of work.

Landmines are still a real and constant threat to millions of people. They continue to take innocent lives at an alarming rate.

Malaysia is committed to the attainment of a truly universal ban on anti-personnel landmines and is proud to be one of the pioneers in the region to join the growing family of the Ottawa Convention. Only 23 months have passed since its entry into force and already 139 States have signed the Convention. Malaysia firmly believes that the Ottawa Convention has irreversibly established itself as the international norm in banning anti-personnel landmines.

Malaysia signed the Convention on 3 December 1997 and deposited its instrument of ratification on 22 April 1999.

On 23 January 2001, Malaysia completed its stockpile destruction of anti-personnel landmines and accordingly fulfilled its obligations under article 4 of the Convention. The destruction of 94,263 anti-personnel landmines began on 15 January 2001 and took place at three different locations in Malaysia, using one of the safest and most effective methods. This historic event was conducted in the presence of representatives from several international non-governmental organizations and also the media, specially invited to witness the event.

(Mr. Reza, Malaysia)

Malaysia became the twenty-seventh State party to have destroyed its stockpile of anti-personnel landmines. Just two weeks ago, Bulgaria, the twenty-sixth State party to have completed its stockpile destruction, informed the Conference of its action in this regard. More significantly, Malaysia is now the first mine-free country in Asia.

Malaysia's decision not to retain any anti-personnel landmines for training and development purposes, which is permissible under article 3 of the Convention, is another commitment that we are proud to make.

Mr. President, Malaysia is a strong supporter of the Ottawa Convention. At the First Meeting of States Parties in Maputo, Mozambique, in 1999, Malaysia was elected as co-rapporteur of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction. Currently, Malaysia and Slovakia are co-chairs of the said Standing Committee. At the same time, Malaysia is also on the Coordinating Committee of the Ottawa Convention, established immediately after the Second Meeting of States Parties in Geneva. Malaysia also co-sponsored resolution 55/33 V on the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, tabled at the United Nations General Assembly last year.

Malaysia is firm in its conviction that the humanitarian suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines far outweighs their military utility. In this context, we would like to see the political push for universal acceptance of this Convention sustained and intensified. Malaysia also strongly believes that it is pertinent for the issue of landmines to be placed high on the agenda of regional forums to complement efforts to universalize the Convention.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. Reza, for that statement and for your kind words. I give the floor now to Ambassador Henrik Salander, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. SALANDER (Sweden): Mr. President, I have the honour to take the floor today on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union. Furthermore, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia - and Cyprus and Malta, also associated with the Union - align themselves with this statement.

Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for me to see you in the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I have always appreciated your energy and your creativity, and I believe they have well served the Conference in the difficult times it is now confronting. I also want to extend the greetings of the European Union to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, even in his temporary absence, and a warm welcome to our new Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Román-Morey.

Mr. President, the European Union has asked for the floor to set out the views of its member States on the work of the Conference on Disarmament in 2001 and the expectations and hopes that we collectively have for this year.

(Mr. Salander, Sweden)

The year 2000 proved to be another year of standstill and stalemate for the Conference, which was unable effectively to launch its work. Thus far, the beginning of 2001 has not been promising either. While paying tribute both to you, Mr. President, and to the presidents of the Conference immediately preceding you - Ambassador Lint of Belgium, Ambassador Amorim of Brazil and Ambassador Draganov of Bulgaria, who spared no efforts in attempting to find a compromise solution - and while thanking them wholeheartedly, the European Union can only deeply regret this situation.

That said, the year 2000 was not a uniformly dismal year for multilateral efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation. The European Union wishes to stress that the NPT Review Conference was an important success, and we have on many occasions welcomed the adoption of its Final Document. The European Union will fulfil its responsibility in this regard by contributing to the full implementation of the Final Document.

In the context of the Conference on Disarmament, this refers especially to two important practical steps which were unanimously agreed by the States parties to the NPT, namely, the negotiations on a fissile material treaty and the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community for disarmament negotiations. The persisting stalemate within this body thus does nothing to strengthen the international regime for disarmament and non-proliferation.

This situation also prevents us from doing today what we actually decided to do, and started to do, in 1998 - the immediate and effective launch of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, taking into account both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. The full implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the negotiation of an FMCT constitute the next essential steps in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The need for an immediate start to such negotiations was clearly reaffirmed in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference, and also in resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly later in the year. In spite of the delays, the European Union continues to attach the utmost importance to starting the negotiation of such a treaty during this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament and to its conclusion at the latest within five years.

Mr. President, the European Union still hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to overcome the obstacles to the effective launch of its work very soon and thus respond to the legitimate expectations of the international community.

(Mr. Salander, Sweden)

If this endeavour is to succeed, the security concerns of all States must be taken into account. Three undertakings - the immediate launch of FMCT negotiations, as well as dealing with both nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space within subsidiary bodies whose mandates need to be both pragmatic and substantial in order to be accepted by all - taken together, constitute the basis today for an agreement upon which we can begin our work.

Mr. President, throughout the sessions of last year, the member Governments of the European Union provided continued and substantive support for the efforts of the successive presidents of the Conference. Their work, refined over the months and manifest in document CD/1624 - which has come to be known as the Amorim proposal - contains, in the view of the European Union, the elements for a rapid agreement, if all members of the Conference display a spirit of openness and pragmatism. We are also convinced that other delegations and groups of countries share this assessment of the situation, which would allow the President to arrive at a solution.

There is no need today to detail the views of the European Union on the other items of the Conference's agenda that are included in CD/1624. We support the start of work on those items, too, and we will come back to outline our positions in relation to them, as soon as the Conference reaches agreement and starts on substantive work.

Mr. President, I would also like to recall today that the European Union particularly supports the prospective Conference membership of those member States of the Union and associated countries which have applied for admission to the Conference. We therefore support the continuation of the enlargement process of the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me conclude by saying that we strongly urge the Conference to explore all avenues to start substantive work. We, the European Union, as well as the States that have aligned themselves with this statement, will not fail to support the President actively and energetically in endeavouring to restore the important and central position of the Conference on Disarmament in the web of international forums upon which we all depend.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for that statement and your kind words, and I now give the floor to Ambassador Hu Xiaodi of China.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I take the floor during your presidency, allow me to begin by expressing the appreciation of the Chinese delegation for your unremitting efforts to facilitate the early start of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Draganov, for the valuable endeavour he has made to bridge the differences and bring the Conference out of its deadlock. Furthermore, I would take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Petrovsky, to our new Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Román-Morey, and to the other staff members of the Conference secretariat, for the hard work and commendable service that they have rendered to our Conference.

(Mr. Hu, China)

Mr. President, with the midnight striking of the bell on New Year's Eve, humankind has entered the twenty-first century. While this past century has seen unprecedented progress in world civilization, it has also witnessed the untold sufferings of humankind in countless wars and conflicts. Reflecting on the past in the light of the present, humankind's most urgent and heartfelt aspiration must be to build and preserve lasting peace, common security and universal development in the twenty-first century. Facing a new century, we firmly believe that only through mutual understanding, accommodation, respect, coordination and cooperation can all the world's countries together maintain peace and security and achieve development and prosperity. The old security concept, which was based on military alliances, operated through the build-up of armaments and had as its aim the quest for one country's absolute security to the detriment of other countries' interests, should be discarded. The twenty-first century needs a new security concept which should be centred on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, cooperation and resolving disputes through dialogue.

The Chinese Government has all along pursued an independent peace-oriented foreign policy, in which it attaches importance to, and actively participates in, the ongoing efforts of the international community to promote just and rational arms control and disarmament. In the new century, China will stick to its set of principles, views and positions with regard to preserving strategic security and stability, promoting nuclear disarmament and preventing the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. It will continue to honour its international commitments and stands ready to make greater efforts to safeguard the enduring peace and common security of all the world's countries.

Mr. President, given that nuclear weapons were invented by humankind in the twentieth century, humankind should also be able to eliminate them in the twenty-first century. The Final Document adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference will be of great importance and benefit in guiding and promoting the future nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament process.

We believe that progress in nuclear disarmament hinges on preserving the global strategic balance and stability and ensuring that the security of all countries remains intact. The countries with the largest nuclear arsenals should continue to take far-reaching and irreversible steps to reduce their respective nuclear arsenals.

As a nuclear-weapon State, China does not evade its responsibilities and obligations in respect of nuclear disarmament. Through its sensible policies on nuclear weapons and its sound position on nuclear disarmament, China has actually made an outstanding contribution to the cause of international nuclear disarmament. The Chinese Government has always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons. In 1994, the Chinese Vice-Premier and then Foreign Minister Mr. Qian Qichen, proposed at the United Nations General Assembly that the international community should negotiate and conclude a treaty banning nuclear weapons. We hope that such a treaty may be concluded at an early date in the new century.

(Mr. Hu, China)

China actively participated in the negotiation of the CTBT, and was among the first group of countries to sign the treaty. The treaty has already been submitted to the National People's Congress for ratification. We continue insistently to urge that all nuclear-weapon States undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances, and that they unconditionally commit themselves never to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. These undertakings should be codified into solemn, international legal instruments. At the same time, nuclear-weapon States should also bring their own nuclear weapons back to their own territories and renounce the policies and practices of "nuclear sharing" and the "nuclear umbrella".

The most urgent and imperative task facing us today is to preserve the ABM Treaty and check the trend of weaponization of outer space. This is also indispensable for the follow-up steps as specified in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference to proceed. With regard to the issue of how to deal with nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, the Chinese delegation supports the proposals put forward by the Group of 21, in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571. China also supports the early negotiation and conclusion of an FMCT in the interests of maintaining global strategic stability and promoting the process of nuclear disarmament.

The ABM Treaty is the cornerstone of preserving global strategic stability. Its significance goes far beyond the scope of United States-Russian bilateral relations and has a direct bearing on the security of all countries and it should therefore be strictly observed. Any attempt to undermine the integrity and effectiveness of the treaty on whatever pretext will have far-reaching negative consequences for international peace and security. For two consecutive years the United Nations General Assembly has, by overwhelming majority, adopted a resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty, amply reflecting the will and determination of the international community to maintain the global strategic balance and stability and its clear opposition to the development and deployment of national missile defence systems.

Outer space is the common heritage of all humankind. It is the shared aspiration of all peoples to use outer space for peaceful purposes. That said, the missile defence systems currently under development pose the serious threat to outer space of its weaponization, which might trigger off a new arms race. We are seriously concerned by reports of a space war exercise which took place in late January this year. The exercise used outer space as a battlefield and took the year 2017 as its scenario. Anti-satellite weapons, strategic missile defence systems and land-based laser weapons were used in the exercise to attack targets in space, and space weapons to launch pre-emptive strikes. This has incontrovertibly demonstrated that the weaponization of outer space is imminent.

For this reason, the international community must now, as a matter of urgency, take effective measures to prevent the weaponization of, and an arms race in, outer space. China urges all countries, and in particular those with great space capabilities, to abide strictly by all

(Mr. Hu, China)

international conventions and arms control and disarmament agreements, including those of a bilateral nature, which relate to outer space. It is imperative that all countries concerned desist from all activities that contravene the principles of the peaceful use of outer space, including missile defence plans.

It is particularly important that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should immediately re-establish its ad hoc committee on outer space, to negotiate and conclude a legal instrument or instruments preventing the weaponization of an arms race in outer space, as urged by the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions, with a view to remedying the deficiencies in the existing international legal regime.

We feel bound to point out that, in recent years, the very country conducting space war exercises and weaponizing outer space has single-handedly obstructed the negotiations on PAROS in the Conference on Disarmament, by denying the risk of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. We are deeply worried about this country's practice, which is certain to result in harm to the interests of other countries without bringing any benefit to itself.

Mr. President, since the end of the Cold War, the international community has made concerted efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction and their means of delivery. Experience has shown that the correct and effective way of tackling the problem of the proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction and their means of delivery is to promote a process of non-proliferation within a framework of collective security and to conduct consultation, dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing. On the other hand, it is totally unacceptable to create any unilateral or small group regimes outside the global systems or, in the name of non-proliferation, to impose unjustified economic or other types of sanctions against other countries. This can only undermine the objective of non-proliferation.

Non-proliferation is aimed at enhancing the equality and security of all countries. It must not be used as a tool for stronger or larger countries to control weaker or smaller ones. Nor should it become an instrument which a small group of countries can use to obstruct the building of national defence by the great majority of countries and to promote their own advantages, with a view to attaining overall domination. The practice of applying double standards should not be allowed in non-proliferation. On the one hand, a certain country vigorously promotes negotiations on non-proliferation to guard against other countries. It is far more concerned about the non-proliferation measures of other countries than about its own, for fear of any loopholes that other countries may have. At the same time, it acts entirely as it pleases regarding the existing arms control and non-proliferation agreements, making disguised reservations through its domestic legislation, rejecting ratification or even threatening to withdraw. Such actions will severely undermine the confidence of the international community in arms control and non-proliferation efforts. Needless to say, for a country to introduce weapons and military means into outer space or other new domains and to seek its own absolute security and superiority at the expense of all others will, without question, deal a crushing blow to international non-proliferation efforts.

(Mr. Hu, China)

Three months ago, it was claimed that responsibility for the failure by the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its work programme rested with China, because China had allegedly engaged in hostage-taking or setting up linkages. This is a distortion of the facts. Today, it is manifest to all that the root cause for the stalemate in the Conference over the last two years lies in the disruption of strategic stability and the introduction of weapons and an arms race in outer space. It is a matter of simple logic that every agenda item taken up by the Conference on Disarmament is closely related to security and that all aspects of security are inseparable. Accordingly, each agenda item is bound to be inherently linked to other items. The priorities of all parties should be equally valued. It is unacceptable that negotiations should be conducted for the benefit of one party while undermining the fundamental interests of others. We sincerely hope that, when giving consideration to its own concerns, the delegation in question will also take into consideration the concerns of other countries.

The Conference on Disarmament is not only a mirror reflecting international security situations, but also a means of promoting international arms control and disarmament. It should not negotiate for negotiation's sake and, what is more, it must never offer mere lip-service without proper negotiation. It is the Conference's duty to conduct genuine negotiations to eliminate or reduce the threat to peace and security and to conduct genuine negotiations to solve the serious problems facing the international community in the field of arms control and disarmament.

Undoubtedly, international arms control and disarmament efforts are currently at a crossroads. The most prominent threat is posed by the attempts to overthrow the ABM Treaty and to weaponize outer space. Under such circumstances, to formulate a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and to start negotiations on such issues as PAROS, nuclear disarmament, FMCT and negative security assurances is not only the obligation of the Conference on Disarmament, but also the only possible way of breaking the current stalemate and moving forward. The Chinese delegation supports the Amorim proposal as a basis for further intensified consultations, and is ready to make further efforts to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Hu, for your statement and for your kind words. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Robert Grey.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Mr. President, two years ago today, I was seated where you are sitting now, serving this Conference as its rotational president. Let me assure you, however, that it is a far greater pleasure to sit here alongside other member States and congratulate you as you complete four weeks of energetic and intense endeavour as presiding officer of the Conference on Disarmament. I know exactly how you feel.

In that same spirit, the efforts of my entire delegation are available to assist you and your immediate successor, Ambassador Vega of Chile, as you and he seek to promote agreement on the basis of the work programme proposal advanced on 24 August 2000 by Ambassador Amorim of Brazil.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

Ambassador Amorim's proposal remains a sound basis for reaching consensus in the Conference. It did not descend from heaven and was not engraved on stone, but I believe your soundings among a wide range of member States have convinced you - they certainly have convinced me - that there is little room for tinkering with it. After all, Ambassador Amorim's proposal took full advantage of significant advances that he inherited from his own distinguished predecessors, including Ambassador Dembri of Algeria and Ambassador Lint of Belgium. Further, Ambassador Amorim's proposal genuinely reflects the broad convictions of our colleagues and our strong belief that the Conference should get down to substantive work that will enhance international peace and security.

A few weeks after Ambassador Amorim tabled his proposal, our former Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, delivered farewell remarks to the Conference, on 21 September 2000. In doing so, he drew on over 20 years of experience, during which he acquired considerable insight into the whys and wherefores of multilateral diplomacy. I would like to commend and call attention to the following key paragraph:

> "Preparing the ground for future negotiations through discussions and technical work is a prerequisite for the start of genuine negotiations. All major negotiations have been preceded by a pre-negotiation stage, in which some shared understanding is reached that a security problem exists and that it must be addressed multilaterally. This process may be arduous and time-consuming, but it provides the guarantee that the end-product, that is to say, treaty-making, is based on solid foundations which take into account the security concerns of all and therefore ensures the universality and effectiveness of the agreements reached. What is required is a common willingness of all the membership of the Conference, making full use of its inbuilt flexibility and recognized expertise, to develop a workable and balanced programme of work which takes into account the priorities and concerns of all."

In effect, Mr. Bensmail was describing the proposal that Ambassador Amorim put forward at the end of the preceding month. By implication he was also commenting on efforts and plans of the Conference for handling the three topics that have been at the centre of ongoing controversy: negotiations to conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty, and deliberations of the Conference on issues related to nuclear disarmament and outer space.

Above all, the Conference needs to start negotiations on an FMCT. In this case, "the pre-negotiations stage" was concluded long ago, after "arduous and time-consuming" endeavours which guarantee that treaty-making will be based on solid foundations. These extended preparations included the following key events:

- On 14 July 1992, President Bush announced a unilateral moratorium on the production of plutonium for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, and he encouraged others to make similar statements. This announcement codified

(Mr. Grey, United States)

circumstances that dated from 1988, when the United States stopped producing plutonium for use in nuclear weapons. Almost a quarter-century before that, in 1964, the United States had ceased to produce highly enriched uranium for this purpose;

– On 16 December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which called for the negotiation of "a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices";

– On 14 January 1994, the Conference on Disarmament approved the appointment of Canadian Ambassador Gerald Shannon as a special coordinator responsible for conducting consultations and developing a broadly acceptable mandate for negotiations to conclude an FMCT;

– On 4 October 1994, United States Secretary of State Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian issued a joint statement in which they promoted the "earliest possible achievement" of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons;

– In December 1994, the Russian Federation announced that, as of the previous 1 October, it had stopped producing plutonium for use in nuclear weapons. This complemented an official announcement made on 7 April 1989 that the former USSR would cease the production of highly enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons later that year;

– On 23 March 1995, Canadian Ambassador Shannon reported to the Conference on Disarmament on the consultations he had conducted in 1994 and 1995. He informed the Conference that member States had reached agreement on a negotiating mandate based on General Assembly resolution 48/75 L, and that various views had been expressed in regard to issues that would arise during the negotiations. On the next day, his report was issued as document CD/1299;

– During later stages of the same plenary meeting, the Conference decided to adopt Ambassador Shannon's report and to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations. Unfortunately, however, the Conference failed to reach agreement on the appointment of a chair, and the FMCT ad hoc committee did not meet that year;

– On 18 April 1995, United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Hurd announced that the United Kingdom had stopped producing fissile material for explosive purposes;

– On 11 May 1995, the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) ended their review and extension conference in New York by adopting a principles and objectives document that called for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of FMCT negotiations;

(Mr. Grey, United States)

- On 22 February 1996, French President Chirac announced that France no longer produced fissile material for use in nuclear weapons;

- On 29 October 1997, the United States and Chinese presidents called for the earliest start of formal negotiations on the prohibition of production of fissile material used in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices;

- On 11 May 1998, after conducting a series of nuclear tests, India announced that it would participate in the negotiations for the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament;

- On 4 June 1998, after meeting here in Geneva - and, in fact, in this very same room - the Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Ministers of China, France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom issued a communique calling for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a fissile material cut-off convention with a view to reaching early agreement;

- On 30 July 1998 - not last and certainly not least - Ambassador Munir Akram, the distinguished representative of Pakistan, delivered a plenary statement in which he declared that "Pakistan had consistently believed that a ban on the production of fissile materials should be promoted through a universal and non-discriminatory treaty negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament and not through unilateral measures". To this end, he said, Pakistan would join in promoting a decision for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations;

- On 11 August 1998, the Conference on Disarmament once again decided to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Nine days later, we appointed Canadian Ambassador Mark Moher as Chair;

- On 4 December 1998, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which called for the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish its ad hoc committee at the beginning of the 1999 session;

- On 20 May 2000, the Parties to the NPT ended their review conference in New York by adopting a final document that called for the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations with a view to their conclusion within five years;

- On 20 November 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which called for the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work for the year 2001 that included the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations. This was adopted without a vote.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

Mr. President, after all the announcements made and promises exchanged over quite a number of years, it is time for us to demonstrate our commitment to FMCT negotiations. The concept of a fissile material cut-off treaty is fully mature, and the plan for negotiations has repeatedly been endorsed by the international community. Given all the ample preparations that I have just cited, the Conference will have shown that it is no longer capable of doing anything of consequence if we cannot even begin to negotiate on this issue. And I know that you, Mr. President, as a worthy successor to the commitment and dedication of your distinguished predecessors Gerald Shannon and Mark Moher, will continue to do your utmost for the cause that they championed.

I recently read the transcript of a statement that the official spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation made in Moscow on 29 January 2001. In it, the Ministry's spokesman advocated "the earliest possible achievement of progress in Conference activity, including - on parallel tracks - the start of the work within its framework of the ad hoc committees on weapons grade fissile materials and on talks to prevent an arms race in outer space." The spokesman then went on to state that Russia considers it "of fundamental importance that both committees have a mandate to negotiate."

Now, to the best of my understanding of this unofficial translation from the Russian original, the net implication is that Russia is linking the two issues, specifying the conditions under which it is prepared to undertake work on either. I therefore find it puzzling that, earlier in the same paragraph, the Ministry's spokesman declared: "we condemn the path of interlinkages at the Conference on Disarmament, of converting one issue into the hostage of another." If the Russian Federation really does condemn linkages, this implies that Russia would be willing to support an immediate stand-alone decision to start FMCT negotiations. Perhaps they would be willing to enlighten us on that.

On 14 September 2000, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi, the distinguished representative of China, declared: "the issues of outer space and FMCT cannot but be closely linked." In part, this stemmed from his view that "serious doubt has been cast on the nature and purpose of FMCT negotiations." I wonder, Mr. President, whether this means that China is planning to produce more fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, or just wants to keep that option open. These comments were Delphic on that issue, to say the least. But one point is exceedingly clear: China has made an explicit linkage between FMCT negotiations and negotiations on a new outer space treaty.

Let me shine a spotlight on the views of my own country. The United States does not link the start of FMCT negotiations to anything else. We would be quite willing to join in a decision to launch FMCT negotiations right now, as a step standing by itself and fully justified on its own merits.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

We understand, however, that such a proposal would not command consensus in the Conference. As a compromise, the United States has accepted the basic approach that Ambassador Amorim advanced on 24 August 2000: a comprehensive programme of work that would include negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and organized discussions on issues related to nuclear disarmament and outer space. The overwhelming majority of member States have said that they can accept that, whereas a small number have not yet agreed to do so.

Let me make the net situation perfectly clear. The United States is prepared to agree to a work programme for the Conference on Disarmament that calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and an ad hoc committee on outer space, in the context of active and ongoing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

When we consider outer space on its own merits, seeking to appraise its suitability as a focus for specific work, the contrast with FMCT negotiations is immediate and striking. As many United States representatives have repeatedly emphasized, there is no arms race in outer space, nor any prospect of an arms race for as far down the road as anyone can see. We fully support the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and judge that it, along with a number of other international agreements, is entirely equal to the task of preventing an arms race in outer space. The United States is therefore not persuaded that there is a realistic and current need for further measures aimed at enhancing international peace and security in outer space. To put it quite simply, outer space issues are not ripe for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We realize that others have different convictions. What we do not understand is why those who do not share our views are unwisely and unrealistically insisting on immediate negotiations on a new outer space treaty, a diplomatic tactic which has the net effect of blocking discussion of the very issues they claim to care about. What are these member States afraid of? Is the current paralysis in the Conference their actual goal? What are they really seeking to achieve? Thanks to these member States, the Conference has not yet started the "pre-negotiation stage" that Mr. Bensmail mentioned in his farewell remarks - the "arduous and time-consuming" work of exploring whether there may be "a shared understanding ... that a security problem exists and that it must be addressed multilaterally."

According to the draft mandate that Ambassador Amorim tabled, members of the Conference would establish an ad hoc committee on outer space to "examine and identify specific topics or proposals." The draft states that such substantive proposals could relate to confidence-building or transparency measures, general principles, treaty commitments, or certain other aspects. For its part, the United States is prepared to participate in an organized discussion aimed at examining those issues - in the context of active and ongoing negotiations on an FMCT.

Outer space is now the home of a wide range of satellites that provide crucial services on economic and commercial levels. In addition, many countries have satellites that provide various types of data for military purposes to ships, aircraft, and ground forces worldwide. These realities will have to be taken into account in any organized discussion of outer space issues. As Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov stated on 1 February 2001, "There are some remedies worse than the disease".

(Mr. Grey, United States)

The United States takes very seriously our obligation stated in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." Since the nuclear arms race ceased quite some time ago, one key benchmark has already been achieved.

Thus far the United States and the Russian Federation have made significant reductions in their nuclear arsenals as the result of negotiated agreements and unilateral initiatives. The substantial reductions called for in START I will be achieved on schedule before the end of the year. When reductions to START II levels have been completed, the United States strategic nuclear arsenal will be only one third as large as it was at the height of the cold war.

The United States remains committed to even further reductions in nuclear arms. President Bush has said the United States should take the lead toward a safer world when it comes to nuclear weaponry. I look forward to reporting on developments in this field as we pursue that goal.

It is exceedingly difficult to believe that the physical security and ultimate fate of hundreds of millions of human beings must for ever be held hostage to the prospect of instant annihilation. This intense irony, this profound paradox was at the core of cold war theories that seem well overdue for an upgrade. Although the new United States administration will review these issues over the coming weeks, it would not be premature to point out that missile defence can enhance strategic stability and further reduce the danger that nuclear weapons will ever be used.

Given the progress achieved thus far and the other factors I have mentioned, what can the Conference actually do to facilitate the long-term process of nuclear disarmament? The single most important step is for member States to decide to launch negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. This, after all, is the only multilateral undertaking related to nuclear disarmament that can actually be negotiated now. Prohibiting the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is a necessary step on the long-term path toward complete elimination. In addition, by becoming parties to an FMCT, the nuclear-weapon States would accept inspection, monitoring, and reporting requirements that are likely to be far more intrusive than any which apply to them now.

On the other hand, what can member States of the Conference expect to achieve in a separate ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament? We really do not know, and these chronic doubts were closely associated with the long-standing reluctance of the United States to agree to the establishment of such a committee.

On 7 March 2000, Mr. Frank Miller, then serving as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Strategy and Threat Reduction - and he has subsequently gone on, I might report, to a very senior job in the National Security Council - gave an extended briefing in this chamber

(Mr. Grey, United States)

on achievements thus far and United States plans for further reductions in nuclear arms. It was thoroughly rooted in current realities, and it seemed to be well received by those who attended.

After considering this event and its net outcome, the United States Government decided that, as a major step aimed at bringing about agreement on a work programme that included active and ongoing negotiations on an FMCT, the United States could agree to the establishment of an ad hoc committee in which member States would discuss issues related to nuclear disarmament.

In comparison, Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov said on 1 February 2001 that Russia supported the idea of establishing "a subsidiary body entrusted with an exploratory mandate for broad discussions on the problem area of nuclear disarmament." Would that be an ad hoc committee along the lines proposed by Ambassador Amorim, or is the Russian delegation supporting something else? Once more, I would welcome enlightenment on this.

As I have already stated, the United States has made yet another adjustment to its strong initial views on the overall work programme of the Conference. In other words, we have agreed with great reluctance to the establishment of an ad hoc committee in which member States will discuss issues related to outer space. And having taken these two important and difficult steps, we have gone as far as we are prepared to go.

Mr. President, I believe that member States are as close as we can ever expect to be to agreement on an overall programme of work. We have been wrestling with this for several years, and it would be exceedingly unwise to let the moment slip away. After all, the proposals we are actively considering owe much to the wisdom and discernment of many prior presidents of eminent stature, including two highly distinguished diplomats who previously served as foreign ministers of their respective countries - Ambassador Dembri of Algeria and Ambassador Amorim of Brazil. My delegation takes their contributions very seriously. Their efforts have clearly identified the kind of work programme that should command consensus.

It is therefore deeply disappointing that the Conference is becoming more and more like England's Long Parliament of the seventeenth century, an irrelevant and anachronistic irritant that clearly became a major part of the problem and not of the solution. Certain delegations accept proposals on the premise that others will reject them and relieve these delegations of the need to do so on their own. Then, when a consensus seems to be emerging, they scuttle back and forth, disavowing what they previously claimed to support while trying to raise the stakes in their favour. Tactical intrigue becomes an end in itself, and the notion of a collective responsibility to make a positive contribution to multilateral arms control is rapidly becoming a distant and fading memory.

It is important to understand that unused attributes and traits may atrophy or even become extinct, and that institutions which do not perform according to just and reasonable expectations may well end up extinguishing themselves. If this Conference takes yet another opportunity to miss an opportunity, this is precisely the risk it will be running.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Grey, for that statement and for your kind words.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize Ambassador Seibert of Germany.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): May I first take this opportunity to thank you for your untiring efforts to resolve the key outstanding issues and to move us forward to substantive work. If this has eluded us, it is certainly not due to a lack of skill or effort.

My delegation could have supported both the original Amorim proposal and your own proposal, and we do believe that intensive consultations on this issue must continue. We are not convinced, however, that the underlying problems outside this Conference can be resolved through further fixes in the so-called Amorim proposal or any variants thereof. It is obvious that a large majority of delegations in this room could accept the Amorim proposal. It is of little help, however, if some delegations can only accept the proposal as a basis for consultations but not as a basis for consensus.

We therefore believe that the time has come to reflect on what useful work the Conference can do until the key outstanding issues have been resolved. It is in this sense that I should like to welcome the initiative by the distinguished Ambassador of Myanmar. We will carefully examine his proposal.

There may be various ways for the Conference to engage in substantive work. My delegation is ready to explore all possible avenues to this end, and we do hope that other delegations will join constructively in this effort.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador Seibert, for your statement and for your kind words. Are there others who wish to take the floor now? If not, then I take the floor myself.

My presidency of this Conference ends tomorrow, as you know, with my mandate unfulfilled. To be honest, I am not surprised, but I am still disappointed that I have not found it possible to end our impasse, to achieve work programme agreement during my term.

I sought to prepare a recommendation for immediate programmed work on the basis of CD/1624. I calibrated its mandates and I added text to the accompanying statement to try - counter-productively, it turned out - to present the proposal as programming that might conceivably commence and be of value in current circumstances. But neither any effort of mine over the past weeks - nor any other text aired regionally last week - has gained consensus support. Given that words evidently cannot now describe an agreement between parties on the PAROS mandate in CD/1624, work programme consensus is not achievable. Formal programmed work is not on our immediate horizon.

(The President)

Furthermore, my call in our consultations a week ago for suggestions to help close the gap between CD/1624 and consensus provoked not only the rehearsal of PAROS mandate problems but also the reiteration of widespread support for a stronger mandate for the Ad Hoc Committee charged with nuclear disarmament. After our meeting, I reviewed text on how we might address specific steps in dealing with nuclear disarmament with some key parties. They were variously unwilling to consider any change or consider any isolated change whatever. The broader context in which change in the nuclear disarmament mandate and/or other mandates in CD/1624 might be effected consensually will naturally be a subject of intense inquiry for my successors.

Although my efforts have not produced any breakthrough toward consensus, they may have advanced the process of discovery set in train by my predecessors. Among other lessons, we have learned since our opening plenary a month ago that the tight linkages with which we have bound subject to subject and mandate to mandate in CD/1624 are doubly costly. Not only would none of the formal work begin until all of it began, but now, because negotiations and talks are integral parts of CD/1624, and because some parties do not want talks without any negotiations, the linkages in our long-pending proposal threaten to preclude any unprogrammed treatment whatever of any of its subjects, leaving us in the awkward position of wanting to treat substance credibly - without touching fissile material, nuclear disarmament or the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We clearly have more than one knot to escape.

As I said two weeks ago, I think we have learned as well that delegates do not want to pretend here. There is too much at stake for make-believe. Even while they regret that the Conference on Disarmament is restrained by the state of current major power relations, most delegations nonetheless value the Conference's marriage to reality and do not want it freed through divorce, through any sort of make-work. Nor do they want to replicate here much of what they do elsewhere in the Disarmament Commission, in the First Committee or in treaty bodies.

I think we have also learned over the last month that, given current circumstances in major power relations, dominated as they are by doctrinal upheaval and related security declarations and gestures of great sweep, agreement on a work programme for the Conference on Disarmament is not currently possible. Read the papers, if only the headlines. There can be no informed surprise that these are not proving good weeks or months at all to be trying to get major powers to agree to start negotiating a ban on weapons material production, say, or to deal with such currently charged subjects as PAROS and nuclear disarmament - or to launch the rest of CD/1624.

And nor, we know, will work programme agreement prove possible tomorrow morning - or for some time to come. While we will want our president to carry the search forward, ever alert to possibilities to improve CD/1624 as a basis for further intensive consultations, we may decide that the time has come to address the role and work of the Conference in the absence of an agreed work programme, which would mean to seek and define value that the Conference might add to members' shared interests while the search for agreement on a formal work programme goes on.

(The President)

That search for value will preoccupy my successors and all delegations. It will no doubt involve soul-searching, however public, for it must address and credibly answer a string of natural questions:

- In light of its origins, history and evolution, what roles can the Conference on Disarmament play in the search for multilateral security? Negotiation, yes, when parties are willing and ready - but what roles work when they are not?

- What do we mean by "pre-negotiations", "preparations for negotiations", "exploration", "discussion" and other such terms of engagement? What are the prerequisites for success, for valuable work in such treatments of elements of our substantive agenda?

- What is the political role of the Conference? How might its platform be enhanced to increase the influence of its work and the extent of effective engagement which it provides?

- What is the public, informational and educational role of the Conference - as distinct from the outreach of its assembled delegations?

- What value do we recognize in the obvious Conference on Disarmament function of assembling and cross-germinating a unique concentration of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament expertise? For that role alone, what benefits - for the United Nations, for treaty bodies and for other endeavours - ought to be credited to this house?

- Might our group system be made more transparent (lest it hide cheap and anonymous vetoes) and fruitful (with wider sharing of the benefits of group consideration)?

- Although they would not likely promise to be decisive, might procedural and structural reforms be usefully pursued to facilitate negotiations once our global context had permitted their resumption?

- Finally, does it have to be all or nothing around here? Need fallow seasons be such hard times? The rule of consensus is congenital and for ever, we know that; major players will not forsake the brakes that its veto gives them. But when that rule is combined with the regular insistence that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed and when we encounter, as we do these days, a resistance to address any substance informally so long as it pends in CD/1624, the closest thing we have to an agreed programme of work - well, then, our prospects are straitened indeed. How might they be enhanced?

- In sum, if the Conference on Disarmament is not to be used for negotiations for a while, what would constitute a reasonable stewardship programme for the Conference?

(The President)

Ambassador Vega, I do hate to leave such tough questions to you and your successors, but it is not as though I picked off any easy ones myself. There is no low fruit on this tree.

Our world is changing before our eyes as we get over the cold war and face a more complex nuclear future. Real change like today's in our thinking is full of the discomfort of the destruction of well-established assumptions, very hard on old liturgy, but it is also full of new perceptions, possibilities and responsibilities. Certainly, if only for the sake of comprehension, such change is full of work for the likes of us. We need to be energized here, summoned to duty by change and challenge in our field.

I have shared my view of our duty here with you from the start - and, to finish, I urge again that together we use this unique institution as we can to build human solidarity, enough at least, and in time, to avoid for ever what would be the last major no-holds-barred war of our kind. I urge that we use this forum as we can to express the health and the dignity in us, to respect our natural duty to control, contain and eliminate nuclear arsenals. I urge that we use this Conference as we can to seek common ground, to serve interests that we all share, weapon and non-weapon State alike, NPT party and non-party together, States from all the groups and regions, all as one, eye to eye here, gathered to try to serve our security in this Conference with community, with trust and with verified multilateral action - so that we might all feel much less inclined to try to serve it elsewhere with arms.

I am very grateful to all those who have helped me try my best to do my own duty as president well. I thank all you delegates for your unfailing courtesy, for your patient counsel and for all the good will and encouragement you have shared with me. I thank Vladimir Petrovsky, in his absence, and I thank Enrique Román-Morey, at my side, off to such a fine start, and Jerzy Zaleski and the rest of the secretariat team for their thorough professionalism and their constant competence. I thank the translators who make more good sense of what we say than we probably deserve. I thank the officials who gave me time and advice here, in New York and in the capitals which I visited. I thank Petko Draganov and Juan Enrique Vega, with both of whom it has been a pleasure to cooperate. I owe an enormous debt to my constant colleague, Marc Vidricaire, and I thank him, Anouk Lamarre, Johane Coulombe, Nancy Belair and the rest of the Canadian team here and at home, including Scott Proudfoot from Ottawa with us today, for their solidarity and their support.

And I thank my good fortune. Despite the tight straits, presiding over this Conference of you delegates has been an honour that I shall treasure among my memories for the rest of my life.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference, presided over by Ambassador Vega, to whom I wish all good fortune during his term as president, will be held a week today, Thursday, 22 February 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.